

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method, comprising the steps of:

providing a set of predetermined function definitions
5 which are different; and

preparing a project definition expressed in a public
communication protocol, said project definition including:

a plurality of function portions which each correspond
to one of said function definitions in said set, and which
10 each define at least one input port and at least one output
port that are functionally related according to the
corresponding function definition;

a further portion which includes a source portion
identifying a data source and defining an output port
15 through which data from the data source can be produced,
and which includes a destination portion identifying a data
destination and defining an input port through which data
can be supplied to the data destination; and

20 binding information which includes binding definitions
that each associate a respective said input port with one
of said output ports.

25 2. A method according to Claim 1, including the step
of selecting as said public communication protocol the
Extensible Markup Language (XML) protocol.

30 3. A method according to Claim 1, wherein one of said
function definitions implements a function which varies in
dependence on control input; and wherein said preparing
step includes the step of including in said project
definition, for each said function portion therein that
corresponds to said one of said function definitions,
respective control information for use as said control
input.

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4. A method according to Claim 3, wherein said preparing step includes the step of including in said project definition a list which identifies at least some of said function, source and destination portions, said project definition including for each said portion in said list a section which sets forth any said control information for that portion, and a section which includes said binding definitions for that portion.

10 5. A method according to Claim 4, wherein said preparing step includes the step of including in said project definition a plurality of process definitions which each include a respective said list, said lists each including a subset of said function, source and destination portions, and said subsets being mutually exclusive.

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6. A computer-readable medium encoded with a computer program which recognizes a set of predetermined function definitions that are different, and which is operable when executed to facilitate preparation in a public
5 communication protocol of a project definition which includes:

a plurality of function portions which each correspond to one of said function definitions in said set, and which each define at least one input port and at least one output
10 port that are functionally related according to the corresponding function definition;

15 a further portion which includes a source portion identifying a data source and defining an output port through which data from the data source can be produced, and which includes a destination portion identifying a data destination and defining an input port through which data can be supplied to the data destination; and

20 binding information which includes binding definitions that each associate a respective said input port with one of said output ports.

7. A computer-readable medium according to Claim 6, wherein said program is operable when executed to use as said public communication protocol the eXtensible Markup
25 Language (XML) protocol.

8. A computer-readable medium according to Claim 6, wherein one of said function definitions implements a function which varies in dependence on control input; and wherein said program is operable when executed to include
5 in said project definition, for each said function portion therein that corresponds to said one of said function definitions, respective control information for use as said control input.

10 9. A computer-readable medium according to Claim 8, wherein said program is operable when executed to include in said project definition a list which identifies at least some of said function, source and destination portions,
15 said project definition including for each said portion in said list a section which sets forth any said control information for that portion, and a section which includes said binding definitions for that portion.

10. A computer-readable medium according to Claim 9,
20 wherein said program is operable when executed to include in said project definition a plurality of process definitions which each include a respective said list, said lists each including a subset of said function, source and destination portions, and said subsets being mutually
25 exclusive.